

Governor's Advisory Board on Service and Volunteerism

October 29, 2015

VDSS Central Regional Office
1604 Santa Rosa Road, Henrico VA

Board Members Present: Jessica Bowser, John Chapman, Elizabeth Childress, Tynetta Darden, Vanessa Diamond, Omari Faulkner, Mark Fero, Terry Frye, Peter Goldin, Ashley Hall, Amy Nisenson, Seema Sethi, Karen Stanley, Laurie Turner, James Underwood, and Leslie Van Horn

Staff Present: Kim Brown, Gail Harris, Amanda Healy, Eva Hite, Deneen Jackson, Patricia Gail Doyle, and Cathy Walker

Advisory Board Meeting Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:10 a.m. by Board Chair Elizabeth Childress. The meeting was held at the VDSS Central Regional Office at 1604 Santa Rosa Road, Henrico VA. Liz welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.

Adoption of the Agenda

A motion was made to adopt the agenda. The motion was properly seconded and passed.

Adoption of the September 29, 2015 minutes

A motion was made to adopt the September 29, 2015 minutes. The motion was properly seconded and passed.

CNCS Program and Funding Overview

Gail Harris introduced the CNCS Program and Funding Overview. She explained the funding streams for service and volunteerism in Virginia. Her PowerPoint Presentation showed how the service funding is broken down between AmeriCorps, SeniorCorps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund. Amanda Healy further explained the Volunteer Generation Fund grants and she named the four programs in Virginia that are recipients of the Volunteer Generation Fund. They are United Way of Southwest Virginia, Community Residences of Northern Virginia, Appalachian Community Action Agency, and Council on Community Services.

Gail continued her slide show to further explain the programs. Tynetta Darden with the Corporation of National and Community Services talked about SeniorCorps and the three different programs. She talked about the Foster Grandparent program and noted the program has been operating for 50 years. Foster Grandparents are volunteers aged 55 and older, that serve children and youth in their communities. RSVP programs have been around for 45 years. RSVP has a broader scope of services, is short term and episodic, and has more flexibility. RSVP has one of the largest networks of volunteers 55 and older. Senior Companions is an income based program with the goal of helping seniors stay at home and independent as long as possible.

Gail then talked about the three programs under AmeriCorps. The programs are VISTA, AmeriCorps State, and NCCC. NCCC is funded directly out of the CNCS office. VISTA provides fulltime members to organizations for one year and is supported by CNCS State. VISTA members focus on building the organizational, administrative, and financial capacity of organizations that fight illiteracy, improve health services, foster economic develop, and otherwise assist low-income communities. Tynetta explained the model for VISTA members.

AmeriCorps State and National funding comes from CNCS to VDSS, Office on Volunteerism and Community Services. VDSS - OVCS staff, with concurrence from the Governor's Advisory Board, then awards the funds to sub-grantees.

Gail explained AmeriCorps funds, both those awarded by VDSS and CNCS. National Direct Programs are directly funded by CNCS and serve multi-states. There are many national direct programs within Virginia. Tynetta said that the Corporation is trying to keep track of members within the state.

Next Gail talked about AmeriCorps Competitive Grants. To be considered for a Competitive grant, programs must be recommended through our office. Programs can then compete nationally for funds from a pool of approximately \$218 million. Three of our programs are now funded with Competitive awards: Greenbrier Learning Center, Alternatives Inc., and Veteran Services. If our programs are competitively funded, those grants come from CNCS funds rather than our Virginia formula funds.

AmeriCorps formula grants are funded from a pool of \$2.8 million. VDSS selects and monitors the awarded programs. 20 programs are currently funded by formula grants. Formula grants include new, continuation, and re-compete programs. Re-compete programs are funded for the three year cycle and are re-competing for another three years. New programs have never been funded before with AmeriCorps funds.

A question was asked about programs that lose funding within the 3 year cycle. Does our office help them try to comply? Amanda Healy explained that we do work closely with programs, and programs losing their funding are usually not surprised. Some programs are not a good fit for AmeriCorps. Amanda explained that we are accountable to the Corporation, therefore we hold programs accountable. The challenge might be they are slow in recruitment or slow in using their funds. She noted that the AmeriCorps Fiscal Officer is watching the funding.

Amanda Healy then explained the new cycle for AmeriCorps funds. She talked about the timeline and changes in the RFP. The Formula applications will be reviewed in February 2016, and Board Members will be asked to help in the application review process. Once we have Competitive Notifications (if any) we will then know how much funding will be available for formula funding. She said we will make a presentation to the Board at the April or May 2016 meeting. She emphasized that we want Board involvement and help in the review process.

Liz Childress then announced the Board will break for sub-committee meetings.

The Board reconvened at 12:55 pm

Remarks from VDSS Commissioner Margaret Schultze

Liz Childress introduced Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Commissioner Margaret Schultze. She then asked the Board to introduce themselves to the Commissioner.

The Commissioner began her remarks with compliments on the 2015 Virginia Service Conference. She also said she was glad the Board was finally codified. She thanked the Board for their commitment to volunteerism.

She told the Board about her time with State Government and becoming the Commissioner. She is responsible for the oversight of all programmatic and operational functions of VDSS.

Commissioner Schultz talked about the VDSS old service systems that are costly, and that the State office issued a request for a new system for services. She noted VDSS has been able to add another category to Medicaid – aged, blind, handicapped. We hope to move TANF, SNAP, and other services to new systems next year.

The Commissioner went on to report that a lot is going on in the benefits area. The focus is to make it easy, time efficient, and more cost efficient. A component of the portal for services is CommonHelp, which makes it easier to apply for services. Anyone can access from any computer. She would like to see kiosks in some offices and noted that we have trial kiosks in place now for some services.

The Commissioner then talked more about the children in foster care. Virginia has about 4,000 kids in foster care. These are children with more challenges, and the Department needs to look at ways to help them. About 800 of these children are ready for adoption and the focus is to place them all with adoptive families. The Commissioner stated about half of those ready for adoption are aged 11 and under. The Commissioner advised that there is a need to get the word out about foster care and the Commissioner said she would love for the Board to promote foster care and adoption.

Commissioner Schultz said we are trying to get code changes to have foster care services go from age 18 to 21. Social Services has tried several times to get the age increase to pass the General Assembly. Services needed for this age group would include job placement services, college application assistance and scholarships. This will further ensure the safety and wellbeing for our children in foster care.

Karen Stanley asked what the amount is needed to do this. Commissioner Schultze said approximately \$3 million and that the services would be staggered in. Leah Walker asked if the increase for services up to age 21 will be for state or local service. The Commissioner answered it would be at the local level.

Liz Childress asked what the Board could do to help. Commissioner Schultze asked the Board help to make sure people know about the kids in foster care that are ready to adopt.

Ashley Hall asked if people can foster that do not plan to adopt. The Commissioner said yes. She noted that some placements are due to delinquency or behavior issues and are placed in care by court. These are not abuse or in-danger cases, but there is still a need for foster care.

Commissioner Schultz again stated that she would like to see more services to support these kids through to 21.

The Commissioner went on to say that VDSS is working on modernizing our child support systems. We have about 1,000 employees just in child support. Social Services is changing from “incarcerating Dad” to helping Dad pay child support. She said we have custodial and non-custodial parents to support. We are looking at ways to make paying easier and more cost efficient. When looking at the footprint for child support offices (we have about 21 offices), The Commissioner feels that we should merge some offices and home base more workers to help save money.

The Commissioner said we are a “kinder/gentler” Social Services. She said VDSS is also looking at ways to help Dad settle his debt to his children and to the State. We have had debt forgiveness in the past to get them back on track. Terry Frye asked if we divert fathers into support programs to keep them paying child support, rather than putting them in jail. The Commissioner said that new programs have been put into place to help rather than punish.

The Commissioner next talked about the need to increase the number of safe, quality child care facilities. Social Services helps low income families pay for child care and we also license child care centers. During the last General Assembly more laws were put into place to govern child care. We need to give parents more tools to teach them how to choose quality child care.

John Chapman asked if different areas could give information to communities on how to adopt ordinances for quality child care. The Commissioner said we would be happy to make presentations.

Leah Walker asked if Social Services is now able to make more random visits. The Commissioner said yes, in a couple of ways. We are working closely with child care providers. Now it is required to notify parents if you are not licensed. We have also added additional staff. The provider’s kids get a higher subsidy if the child care is licensed. Leah Walker then asked if there was an enforcement arm. The Commissioner replied yes, and she then gave an example of a child care provider that was not licensed, with 22 kids in care. We now have authority to contact them and help them get licensed, or we can shut them down.

The Commissioner noted that Southwest Virginia area residents have more challenges finding quality child care. High rates of unemployment and low income are more common in this part of the State. She noted that substance abuse in this part of the State may also contribute to this issue.

Karen Stanly added that CARITAS is expanding their services to add re-entry programs. She hopes they can partner with state programs.

Commissioner Schultze ended by congratulating the Board on their work and thanking them for the opportunity to speak to them.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Communications Committee Report

Laurie Turner said there is a new website for the Governor’s Volunteer Awards and talked about using social media for nominations. Laurie said there is a change in the nominating process. In essence all the Board Members will be involved. Nomination period is open now through December 16, 2015. She said the Committee talked about getting the Governor to send a letter to last year’s winners. She also said there is a need for some communication to nominators.

Laurie went on to share some information on this year’s Day to Serve. 1,400 projects were done by some 70,000 volunteers in Virginia, Maryland, DC, and West Virginia. She said the numbers increased from last year. Creative collaborations helped to increase these numbers.

Gail Harris said we will share the stories through Gail Doyle and our social media sites.

Service & Outreach Committee

Elsa Vasquez-Flores reported that the Committee discussed creating a starter or toolkit for going out in community. The committee will create an elevator speech and toolkit for board members to utilize when making appearances at various special events, ceremonies, etc. The elevator speech will include overview information on the role of the board, the role of OVCS, and

general information on national service and volunteerism in Virginia. The toolkit will include the speech, Powerpoint presentation, and any other pertinent fact sheets/information. The Committee will conduct special training for Board Members at the February 25, 2016 Board Meeting.

The Committee also talked about Mayor's Day, April 5, 2016 and the roll the Board Members should expect to play in this event. The Committee encouraged the Board to reach out to their communities and generate awareness from their local leaders. John Chapman suggested we contact representatives from the Virginia Association of Counties as well. The Committee talked about a targeted invitation to contacts with our AmeriCorps programs in their regions.

Gail Harris added there are several days a year that AmeriCorps members are encouraged to participate in. Last year there were 40 mayors that participated in Virginia. The intent is for Mayors to thank the volunteers in the community. An effort is being made to get as many mayor's on board.

Amanda Healy added for instance Mayor Jones of Richmond has been involved from day one. Leah Walker suggested the Board draft a presentation for Mayors to have as a guide. John Chapman said this year they are going to contact the Municipal League and the League of County Administrators. Elsa Vasquez-Flores asked board members to "like" our FB and twitter pages.

Finally the Committee discussed promoting National Service at the high school level. The Committee discussed ways in which National Service could be presented to this group statewide. The group talked about AmeriCorps Alums chapters could be placed in this role. It was suggested that Abby Hanks could be a resource for starting a chapter.

Programs Committee

Vanessa Diamond reported that the Committee continued discussion on funding streams, with a focus on the administrative support. AmeriCorps programs are required to do monthly reporting, and funding is a reimbursement for program costs. The Committee discussed the amount of the administrative fund. They also discussed a focus on larger programs, with intermediary programs. The Committee believes we need to go out and help develop these intermediates.

Vanessa reported the Committee talked about where the burden is administratively. Karen Stanley asked what would be an intermediary program. Vanessa said that these would support the mission of mother program. They also talked about Volunteer Generation Fund and that review process.

Vanessa also reported that the Committee looked at the additional requirement to review processes for this year's Request for Proposals. Amanda Healy noted that the review process has been changed to make the review process better.

Bylaws Revisions (vote)

Liz Childress then talked about the changes to the Bylaws for the Board. She asked if any other changes were needed. Gail Harris then covered new changes to the Bylaws. A motion was made to adopt, the motion was seconded and approved.

Public Comment

Jessica Bowser updated the Board on the Virginia Service Foundation. She said she was elected treasurer. The Foundation co-sponsored the 2015 Virginia Service Conference and the Foundation now has twice the money as before the Conference. Gail Harris mentioned the AmeriCorps Alumni picnic held over the prior weekend, and that the Foundation helped with some of the costs. Ashley Hall said the Foundation supported Day to Serve, but not many took advantage. Ashley shared the need to find ways to get the word out.

Liz Childress then talked about the Governor's Higher Education Summit at William and Mary College. Jessica Bowser added that the Summit focused on National Service as part of the higher education experience. Liz said The Summit was 2 days of meetings, which included a presentation on where these programs are now and how to expand. She believes the idea will really take off. She said there is a lot of excitement about it. Vanessa Diamond noted it would be great to get 20,000 students to serve, but it will be a big job to execute. Everyone 18-28 should have the opportunity to serve, but there are huge capacity issues on the intake of that many people into programs.

It was noted there will be a follow-up Summit at James Madison University in February 2016 to try to put action plans in place.

Leah Walker told the Board that November is National Education Involvement Month. She said there will be a website for materials. They are also looking to highlight schools that are doing unique things with engagement in education. She also noted that The Department of Education is launching a new website.

Chairperson's Report

Liz Childress then talked about the question raised by an absent Board Member on phoning into meetings. Liz and Gail Harris reviewed the guidelines in the Bylaws. If a Board Member is phoning in on a meeting, it has to be a public place and we would need to publish the location publicly. According to the guidelines it has to be an emergency. Gail said if anyone had further questions on what is considered an emergency, Members can contact Liz Childress or Gail Harris.

Karen Stanley said she went through a video training as a new Board Member that included information on what is considered a public meeting. She said it has not been done for several years. Liz said we may get together a packet.

Liz then talked about incorporating service projects into Board Meetings. She mentioned the service project at CARITAS last year.

She reminded The Board the next Board Meeting is next February 25, 2016. She said there are a lot of things going on before then. She mentioned the review of applications for AmeriCorps.

Liz also asked if anyone has contact with Legislators. Board Members should make contact when special events are coming up. Gail Harris said we would love to know who they are - even local contacts - so we can invite them to special events.

The Board discussed where to get this information and everyone agreed to share at a later meeting.

CNCS State Director's Report

Tynetta Darden said Mayor's Day is coming up and that Board Members can find information on the website nationalservice.gov. Amanda Healy said anyone signed up last year will automatically be signed up this year. Leah Walker asked if CNCS is looking at where there is a need for participation. Tynetta replied yes.

Tynetta said the Mayor's Day Tool Kit will have information to send to contacts. She also wanted to look at different communities and what their specific needs are. She said Virginia wants to be as big as possible.

Tynetta also wants to acknowledge Members of National Service with a pinning ceremony on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2015. She asked The Board to attend any events if available, to please go and thank Veterans. They will officially be a member of CNCS.

Tynetta talked about an RSVP Notice of Funding Opportunity that is out now and closes November 3, 2015. She asked to please direct anyone with questions to the website. Proposals for this funding opportunity are to be in the specific geographic area of Hampton Roads. This fund will be a limited resource with Resilience AmeriCorps. This funding is to support this area due to disproportional effects of climate change. VISTA Members will be placed and this will be 2 year pilot.

OVCS Director's Report

Gail Harris advised the Board that if they had not received their travel reimbursement from the Conference, it is coming.

Gail talked about the AmeriCorps Program Officer vacancy. Initial recruitment has been completed, but we will re-post the position with some changes to the requirements. We have changed the open position to have expertise in program design and monitoring. As soon as the position is re-posted, she will send the information to the Board.

Gail Harris then asked Amanda Healy about the AARP Food Drive. Amanda advised that AARP had a goal of 150,000 lbs. of food donated, but 175,000 pounds of food were collected. Peter Goldin talked about the State's food drive and the groups who collect for the drive. This drive was to help start up new food pantries. This is one of the biggest community outreach events for AARP. Laurie Turner added 221,000 lbs. of food was collected for Day to Serve.

Gail then stated the next Board Meeting will be February 25th, 2016 in Richmond. The location of the next meeting is yet to be determined.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made. The motion was properly seconded and passed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Prepared by: Eva Hite

Submitted by: Gail Harris